

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

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AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 TEL AVIV 2876

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, XF, IS, US

SUBJECT: SENATOR MATHIAS' MEETINGS WITH RABIN AND PERES

BEGIN SUMMARY: SENATOR MATHIAS IN SEPARATE MEETINGS WITH PRIME MINISTER RABIN AND DEFENSE MINISTER PERES ON APRIL 22 PRESENTED HIS ASSESSMENT OF A) CHANGING ATTITUDES IN THE ARAB WORLD TO ISRAEL, AND B) EVOLVING CONGRESSIONAL VIEWS ON THE ARAB-ISRAELI DISPUTE AND AID TO ISRAEL. RABIN AND PERES REVIEWED THE ISRAELI POSITIONS ON ARAB- ISRAELI NEGOTIATIONS, THE PALESTINIAN ISSUE, ISRAELI SETTLEMENTS IN THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES AND THE IMPORTANCE OF U.S. AID TO ISRAEL. THIS MESSAGE HAS NOT BEEN CLEARED WITH SENATOR MATHIAS. END SUMMARY.

1. ARAB ATTITUDES. SENATOR MATHIAS (ACCOMPANIED TO THE MEETINGS BY AMBASSADOR TOON) SAID THAT HE WAS IMPRESSED BY THE MODERATION OF SADAT,

ASAD AND HUSSEIN WHO HAD INDICATED THEIR ACCEPTANCE OF THE EXISTENCE OF ISRAEL AND THEIR DESIRE TO MOVE AHEAD TOWARD FURTHER POLITICAL SETTLEMENTS. THE ARAB LEADERS ALSO HAD CONVEYED TO HIM A SENSE OF URGENCY WHICH PLACED AN IMPERATIVE ON THE UNITED STATES AND ISRAEL TO FIND WAYS TO KEEP THE NEGOTIATING PROCESS MOVING. PRESIDENT ASAD HAD SPOKEN ABOUT THE POSSIBILITY OF PEACE IN THE MIDDLE EAST IF SOMEONE COULD COME UP WITH A CONCRETE PLAN. THE
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SENATOR BELIEVED THAT ISRAEL SO FAR HAD HAD THE "LUCK OF

LEISURE" BUT THERE WAS NOW A REAL QUESTION AS TO WHETHER ISRAEL COULD WAIT UNTIL AFTER THE U.S. ELECTION AND POSSIBLY ITS OWN 1977 ELECTION BEFORE MAKING THE NEXT NEGOTIATING MOVE.

2. CONGRESSIONAL VIEWS. SENATOR MATHIAS SAID THAT THERE WAS NOW A GROWING BODY OF CONGRESSIONAL OPINION WHICH BELIEVED THAT THE ARAB-ISRAELI DISPUTE WAS SOLUBLE AND WHICH WAS LOOKING TO THE PARTIES IN THE REGION TO MOVE AHEAD. THIS WAS DIFFERENT FROM THE VIEW IN THE CONGRESS SEVERAL YEARS AGO. THE U.S. COMMITMENT TO ISRAEL HAD NOT DIMINISHED BUT THERE WERE CLEARLY ELEMENTS OF TRANSITION

IN THE U.S. APPROACH TO FOREIGN AID IN GENERAL AND AID TO ISRAEL IN PARTICULAR. U.S. DOMESTIC ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL PROBLEMS, INCREASED DEPENDENCY ON IMPORTED OIL, A GROWING PERCEPTION OF ARAB MODERATION AND THE ARAB SUCCESS IN DRAMATIZING THE NEED FOR A JUST SOLUTION OF THE PALESTINIAN PROBLEM HAD HAD THEIR EFFECT. THE ADMINISTRATION AND THE CONGRESS NOW WERE STUDYING FOREIGN AID REQUESTS MORE CAREFULLY. THE TRANSITIONAL QUARTER PROBLEM WOULD NOT HAVE ARISEN AT ALL SEVERAL YEARS AGO BUT TODAY BUDGETARY CONSIDERATIONS FIGURED PROMINENTLY IN BOTH THE ADMINISTRATION AND CONGRESSIONAL APPROACH TO FOREIGN AID. WHILE DECLINING TO PREDICT HOW THE TRANSITIONAL QUARTER CONTROVERSY WOULD END, HE BELIEVED THAT THE CONGRESS PROBABLY WOULD APPROVE THE ADMINISTRATION'S FY'77 REQUEST FOR AID TO ISRAEL. THE SITUATION THEREAFTER, HOWEVER, WAS UNPREDICTABLE.

3. ARAB-ISRAELI NEGOTIATIONS. RABIN SAID THAT THE ARAB LEADERS HAVE ALL THE OPTIONS AVAILABLE TO ENTER INTO MEANINGFUL NEGOTIATIONS WITH ISRAEL FOR EITHER A) RESUMPTION OF THE GENEVA CONFERENCE, OR B) BILATERAL END OF THE STATE OF WAR AGREEMENTS. ISRAEL IS READY TO MOVE AHEAD NOW WITHOUT REGARD TO THE U.S. ELECTION OR ITS OWN ELECTION, BUT THE U.S. HAD NOT YET INFORMED IT OF A POSITIVE ANSWER FROM ANY ARAB STATE. AMBASSADOR TOON OBSERVED THAT, WHILE PUBLIC ARAB REACTIONS WERE NOT POSITIVE, THE ARAB STATES HAD NOT YET SAID THEIR LAST WORD ON THE PROSPECTS FOR EXPLORING THE END OF WAR FORMULA. (IN DINNER CONVERSATION SAME EVENING, CONFIDENTIAL

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FOREIGN MINISTER ALLON TOLD MATHIAS THAT THE ARAB POSITION ON THE END OF WAR FORMULA WAS STILL OPEN.) RABIN SAID THAT ON MAJOR ISSUES REGARDING NEGOTIATIONS, THERE WAS NO U.S./ISRAELI DISAGREEMENT. UNFORTUNATELY, THE ISRAELI AND ARAB INTERPRETATIONS OF PEACE ARE COMPLETELY DIFFERENT. HE ASKED RHETORICALLY WHAT ISRAEL COULD DO IF THERE WAS NO POSITIVE WAY TO GO TO AN OVERALL OR MEANINGFUL AGREEMENT.

4. PERES ALSO EMPHASIZED THAT THE CURRENT IMPASSE IN ARAB-ISRAELI NEGOTIATIONS WAS NOT A MATTER OF TIMING, BUT RATHER DUE TO THE DISUNITY OF THE ARAB WORLD AS REGARDS THE NATURE OF A COMPROMISE SOLUTION WITH ISRAEL. HE SAID THAT IT WAS SYRIA, NOT ISRAEL, WHICH HAD COME TO THE CONCLUSION THAT THE U.S. IN 1976 WOULD NOT PRESS STRONGLY FOR MOVEMENT TOWARD NEW AGREEMENTS. ISRAEL, HE SAID, WAS READY TO MOVE AHEAD. HOWEVER, IF NEGOTIATIONS HAD TO TAKE PLACE SIMULTANEOUSLY WITH ALL THE ARAB STATES, THIS WOULD MEAN NO NEGOTIATIONS. HE REPEATED HIS PREFERENCE FOR MOVING AHEAD NOW FOR A SECOND SYRIAN-ISRAELI AGREEMENT.

5. THE U.S. POSITION IN THE ARAB WORLD. RABIN OBSERVED THAT THE OPENNESS OF SYRIA TO THE U.S. TODAY, AS REFLECTED IN THE RECENT VISITS OF A NUMBER OF SENATORS TO DAMASCUS, WAS LARGELY DUE TO THE AMERICAN RELATIONSHIP WITH ISRAEL. SYRIA RECOGNIZED THAT THE ONLY MAJOR OUTSIDE CONSTRAINT ON ITS ACTIVITIES IN LEBANON WAS ISRAEL. AWARENESS OF THIS FACT, AND OF THE U.S. INFLUENCE ON ISRAEL, HAD THEREFORE ENHANCED THE U.S. RECEPTION IN SYRIA. THE U.S., EVEN MORE THAN DURING THE 1970 JORDANIAN CIVIL WAR, COULD PLAY ITS ISRAELI CARD IN THE ARAB WORLD, IN 1970 JORDAN REMAINED A COHESIVE FORCE, WHILE NO SUCH FORCE EXISTS IN LEBANON TODAY. SENATOR MATHIAS OBSERVED THAT ASAD HAD ACCUSED THE U.S. AND ISRAEL OF CONSPIRING TO PREVENT SYRIAN INTERVENTION IN LEBANON WHILE ARAFAT HAD ACCUSED THE U.S. AND ISRAEL OF CONSPIRING TO BRING IT ABOUT.

6. U.S. AID TO ISRAEL. PERES, IN LENGTHY PRESENTATION, EMPHASIZED THAT CONTINUING U.S. SUPPORT FOR ISRAEL WAS THE BEST GUARANTEE FOR A MODERATE AND RESTRAINED FOREIGN POLICY WHICH WOULD ENABLE ISRAEL TO MOVE AHEAD IN FURTHER

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NEGOTIATIONS. ISRAELI CONFIDENCE IN THE U.S. LAREADY HAD HAD POSITIVE RESULTS AS REFLECTED IN THE POST-OCTOBER 1973 AGREEMENTS, ISRAELI READINESS TO MOVE AHEAD WITH NEGOTIATIONS, ITS RESTRAINT AND MODERATION TOWARD THE LEBANESE CRISIS, AND ITS ABILITY TO CARRY OUT THE WEST BANK RELECTIONS. THE ARAB STATES WERE PROCURING \$25 BILLION WORTH OF ARMS (\$7 BILLION ALREADY PURCHASED, \$18 BILLION FOR FURTHER RESUPPLY IN THE NEXT TWO-THREE YEARS). THE SOVIETS WERE USING LIBYA AS A MAJOR ARMS SUPPLY DEPOT AND IN CASE OF A NEW ARAB-ISRAELI WAR, THESE ARMS COULD EASILY BE TRANSFERRED TO EGYPT. IN COMPARISION, ISRAEL WAS ASKING THE U.S. FOR \$1.5 BILLION MILITARY ASSISTANCE ANNUALLY FOR THE NEXT FOUR YEARS, A FUGURE WHICH TOOK INTO ACCOUNT INFLATION, THE NEW U.S. "PROGRESS PAYMENT" SYSTEM, THE TRANSITIONAL QUARTER CHANGEOVER, AND U.S. BUDGETARY

RESTRICTIONS.

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ACTION H-03

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AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

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7. ISRAELI SETTLEMENTS IN THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES. RABIN MAINTAINED THAT NEITHER QADOUM NOR OTHER SETTLEMENTS IN THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES CONSTITUTED AN IMPEDIMENT TO NEGOTIATIONS. THE ARAB STATES, HE NOTED, HAD NOT ADOPTED A DIFFERENT POSTURE TO ISRAEL BEFORE QADOUM. THE 1,000 JEWISH SETTLERS IN THE WEST BANK AND THE 250 IN THE JORDAN VALLEY WERE NOT THE REAL ISSUE. TAKING AN EVEN TOUGHER LINE, PERES INSISTED ON THE RIGHT TO ESTABLISH SETTLEMENTS ANYWHERE IN THE WEST BANK PROVIDED THAT ARABS ARE NOT EXPELLED IN THE PROCESS. THE WEST BANK, HE CLAIMED, HAS BEEN A VACUUM SINCE 1967 AND NO SUCCESSOR REGIME TO JORDAN HAS YET BEEN DECIDED UPON. IT WAS IMPOSSIBLE TO FREEZE THE SITUATION. MOREOVER, ARABS WERE BUILDING HOMES ILLEGALLY IN THE GALILEE BUT THE GOI WAS NOT STOPPING THEM. THE AMBASSADOR REMINDED PERES THAT ISRAELI SETTLEMENTS IN THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES WERE CONTRARY TO THE GENEVA CONVENTION AND TO INTERNATIONAL LAW AND THAT, IN THE U.S. VIEW, THEY CONSTITUTED AN OBSTACLE TO NEGOTIATIONS. SENATOR MATHIAS OBSERVED THAT TWO WRONGS DID NOT MAKE A RIGHT IN THIS MATTER.

8. THE PALESTINIAN ISSUE. SENATOR MATHIAS TOLD PERES THAT ASAD AND ARAFAT HAD BOTH RAISED THE QUESTION OF REPATRIATION AS PART OF A SOLUTION OF THE PALESTINIAN PROBLEM. ARAFAT, HE NOTED, BELIEVED THAT THE PALESTINIANS WOULD REQUIRE THE UNRESTRICTED RIGHT TO RETURN TO THEIR FORMER HOMES IN

WHAT IS NOW ISRAEL. ASAD HAD SPOKEN OF THE RETURN OF JEWS
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FROM ARAB COUNTRIES, WHO WERE DISCRIMINATED AGAINST IN
ISRAEL, TO THEIR PLACES OF ORIGIN. PERES
REPLIED THAT ISRAEL WOULD NOT NEGOTIATE ITS OWN SUICIDE
WITH ARAFAT. THE ARABS, HE OBSERVED, METED OUT TERRIBLE
TREATMENT TO THEIR MINORITIES AND WERE UNWILLING THEM-
SELVES TO BE A MINORITY. THIS HAD BEEN SHOWN IN THE
IRAQI TREATMENT OF THE KURDS AND NOW AGAIN IN LEBANON.
ISRAEL WOULD NOT ALLOW ITSELF TO GET INTO THE SAME
SITUATION.
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